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New York

President: Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda items 57 and 43 (*continued*)

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

(a) New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/206)

(b) Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/212)

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/219)

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): My delegation associates itself with the statements made by Antigua and Barbuda at the 27th meeting and Kenya at the 26th meeting on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States, respectively.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his reports on progress in implementation of and international support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (A/63/206), and the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/63/212), and for his note entitled "2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa" (A/63/219).

Regarding progress in implementation of and international support for NEPAD, Rwanda welcomes the adoption of the political declaration (resolution 63/1) at the conclusion of the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs on 22 September 2008, as well as the recommendations of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group. We firmly believe that, if implemented, they offer Africa a way forward in addressing the many challenges we face.

Rwanda is committed to addressing her peculiar development challenges under the umbrella of NEPAD and through the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals, and we have undertaken a number of initiatives to realize those commitments.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Rwanda places information and communication technology (ICT) at the heart of its development strategy. The Kigali protocol, signed in Kigali on 29 August 2006, is the protocol on the policy and regulatory framework for the NEPAD ICT broadband infrastructure network. The protocol came into force on 13 February 2008 and will guide the implementation of the NEPAD ICT broadband infrastructure network, comprised of Uhurunet — the submarine segment — and Umojanet — the terrestrial segment — in order to provide quality and affordable telecommunications connectivity to Eastern and Southern Africa and to the

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rest of the African continent. This network will be a major step towards interconnecting the African continent and helping to bridge the digital divide. We therefore urge those countries that have yet to ratify the Kigali protocol to do so to ensure its implementation.

The NEPAD e-Schools Demonstration Project — the Demo — aims to equip African schools with appropriate ICT, equipment and apparatus to ensure that African youth graduate from primary and secondary schools with the relevant skills and to contribute towards improving education on the continent by introducing appropriate ICT through training and by providing appropriate digital content to all African schools to enable them to function effectively in the information society and knowledge economy. The e-Schools Demo is being implemented through the Information Society Partnership for Africa's Development (INSPAD), and under INSPAD leadership, two companies — Cisco and Microsoft — have formed a consortium in support of Rwanda.

Rwanda's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) country review report was published in November 2005. Since then we have registered tremendous progress in all the focus areas of the APRM.

On democracy and good political governance, Rwanda has conducted successful elections at the local and national levels, and after our recently concluded parliamentary elections women, for the first time in history, hold 56 per cent of the parliamentary seats, leading not only Africa but the world. We have also registered significant progress in decentralization and in reform of the judicial sector.

On economic governance and management, Rwanda is now fully compliant with the best practices for budget transparency. We remain committed to a zero-tolerance policy on corruption and have established institutions to enforce that policy. There has been significant progress in corporate governance through enacting corporate legislation and in socio-economic development through our Vision 2020 and second-generation Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The progress Rwanda and Africa have made in implementing their commitments under NEPAD is there for all to see. However, that progress risks being eroded by the food, energy and economic crises, all of which impact on Africa far more than they do on any other continent. It is therefore imperative that the international community respond to those crises promptly and decisively through the full implementation of the political declaration on Africa's development needs (resolution 63/1) and of the recommendations of the MDG Africa Steering Group. However, trade and investment are Africa's true guarantors for economic and social development, and it is critical that the Doha Development Round resume to ensure that Africa plays its rightful role in the global trading system.

Concerning causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, Rwanda welcomes the various initiatives that have been undertaken by the international community to prevent conflict in Africa. We particularly welcome the partnerships between the United Nations and the African Union to prevent and respond to conflict in Africa. I wish to emphasize that Rwanda strongly believes that prevention remains the best and preferred method to promote peace and sustainable development in Africa.

The Secretary-General's report (A/63/212) paints an optimistic picture of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we would very much wish to share his optimism. However, as recent events have shown, the situation remains far from optimistic. The failure comprehensively to address the threat posed by the genocidal forces of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the ex-Forces armées rwandaises/Interahamwe to the people of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as set out in the Nairobi communiqué and in Security Council resolution 1804 (2008), has led to the perpetuation of conflict. We therefore call upon the international community to ensure that the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo implement their commitments, as set out in the Nairobi communiqué and Security Council resolution 1804 (2008).

Rwanda welcomes the partnerships that regional organizations have forged with the United Nations on peacekeeping operations, in particular the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Rwanda remains firmly committed to its role as a major troop contributor to that force.

(*spoke in French*)

With regard to the 2001-2010 Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa, the report transmitted by the Secretary-General's note (A/63/219) shows the progress made, especially in Africa, in the struggle to eliminate malaria.

The World Malaria Report indicates that Rwanda has managed to reduce the cases of malaria by 66 per cent over a six-year period. By 2012, we aim to reach the preliminary phase of eradicating that disease, which means that we will then have less than one case of confirmed malaria per 1,000 inhabitants. Our progress has been possible particularly as a result of the following actions: the promotion of massive distribution of moderately priced long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets, prompt and specific treatment through appropriate artemisinin combination therapy — ACT — medicines, the implementation of home-based management of fever by community health workers, control of the disease through campaigns of indoor spraying of homes, an increase in the use of health services, and an increase in the number of individuals with health insurance.

Rwanda remains fully committed to the fight to eradicate the disease in Rwanda and Africa.

Mr. Terzi de Sant'Agata (Italy): First of all, I should like to thank the representative of France for his statement on behalf of the European Union, with which I fully agree. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (A/63/206).

In its capacity as incoming President of the Group of Eight (G8), Italy has taken note of the call made by the President of the General Assembly — which was reiterated by Kenya on behalf of the African Union and by many other colleagues, including the representative of Rwanda, who just spoke — to prevent the current turbulence in world markets from pushing Africa's needs off the radar screen of the international community. Let me reassure the Assembly that we will do everything in our power to that end. Indeed, this is the time for the G8 to relaunch its partnership with Africa and to act as a catalyst for renewed efforts at all levels in support of NEPAD.

The United Nations is the natural and necessary place where our efforts should be coordinated and our strategies defined, in full accordance with the vision of the African membership. The High-Level Meeting on Africa's development needs was a very significant opportunity. I would like to recall that, at the G8 Summit held in Genoa seven years ago, Italy proposed an Africa Action Plan that was later approved at the G8 Summit held in Kananaskis, Canada. The plan is focused on the very same objectives that NEPAD is pursuing: an Africa free of conflicts, hunger and violations of human rights.

A collective commitment to targeted action in the areas of aid and trade was widely requested by African leaders during the High-Level Meeting. Italy intends to convey that sense of urgency at the 2009 G8 Summit. The elements emerging from this debate will therefore be equally and duly reflected in our proposals for the Summit.

We have taken careful note of the expectation in Africa for enhanced resource flows. Indeed, improving the quality of assistance is a key priority. Governance in Africa is improving at both the national and the local levels. At the same time, assistance should become better coordinated and more predictable; it should be less bound to conditions. We should seek greater harmonization among donors, avoiding useless duplication. The High-Level Forum held in Accra underscored the depth of those concerns. After the Rome, Paris and Accra declarations, we see next November's Doha Conference as a key opportunity for further progress in those areas.

The goal of a conflict-free Africa, set by the heads of State and Government of the African Union, is equally strategic. Our common denominator should remain the promotion of African ownership in the maintenance of peace and security on the continent.

My Government is committed to supporting strengthened African institutions in the areas of early warning, preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. The 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union should be seen as a keystone of the cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the European Union, that are active in Africa. To that end, my Government has contributed €40 million to the African Peace Facility.

Action in the field should be supported by a clear political vision. That is why the decision-making process at the United Nations should respect and act on

the principle of African ownership, which we recognize for regional and subregional organizations in Africa. As an elected member of the Security Council, my country is committed to abiding by that principle. We believe that further improvement in the cooperation between the Council and the main regional stakeholders would constitute a strong asset in ensuring concrete results in the area of crisis management. The joint meeting held on 16 April 2008 between the United Nations Security Council and members of the African Union Peace and Security Council was a significant step in that process.

Nevertheless, the sustainability of our policies will depend on our success in tackling the root causes of instability. Combating extreme poverty, youth unemployment, and environmental degradation, as well as pandemics such as malaria, which undermine Africa's human resources, is a truly collective interest. It is therefore essential that each member of the international community be fully committed to facing those challenges.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its support for the political declaration (resolution 63/1) adopted on 22 September 2008 on the occasion of the High-Level Meeting on the theme "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward". The Declaration reaffirms the belief of Member States in a prosperous future for Africa in which the core human values of dignity and peace are fully enshrined.

Kazakhstan supports the efforts of the United Nations and of the international community as a whole to mobilize resources for the implementation of programmes and projects within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is considered a central agenda in the field of development for the continent. We also thank the Secretary-General for establishing the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to leverage international support for NEPAD.

Substantial progress has been made globally in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed goals. However, Kazakhstan notes with regret that, as we approach the midpoint for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, specified in 2000, Africa remains the only continent that is lagging behind on every Goal, despite a very encouraging recent rise in the rate of economic growth and overall improvement in the policy environment on the continent.

Acknowledging the leading role of the United Nations in the implementation of NEPAD, we believe that the Organization and its structural divisions should reconsider their approach to the distribution of funds in order to strengthen their support for African countries in their efforts to achieve the MDGs by the specified deadline. The recent rise in food prices is putting great pressure on African economies and threatening to unravel hard-won progress in fighting hunger and malnutrition. However, the crisis also offers a window of opportunity for increasing needed expenditures in the area of agriculture and to remove the obstacles to an open trading system for agricultural commodities to benefit African countries.

As a landlocked country facing trade problems, we understand Africa's difficulties in overcoming trade barriers that hinder the export of produce to the international markets and raw production-related export. As reflected in the recent outcome document of the High-Level Meeting on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action (resolution 63/2), Africa's infrastructure needs must be addressed in a regional manner if countries are to reap the benefits of economies of scale, to develop intra-African trade and to enhance competition in the global economy. In that regard, the Doha Round of negotiations should determine the trade preferences to be granted to Africa in order to accelerate its development.

As a country with an economy in transition and large deposits of natural resources, Kazakhstan is very well aware of the problems faced by African countries seeking to enter the system of international economic relations. In that regard, Kazakhstan fully supports the efforts of the Group of Eight and other donor countries to ease the debt burden through both multilateral and bilateral means, and to promote foreign direct investment that would enable the expansion of capacities, the diversification and development of regional markets and the creation of a highly qualified human resources pool.

We believe that the primary responsibility for achieving development goals remains with African Governments, which have shown tremendous leadership in recent years. However, in order to

achieve the MDGs, external public financing for development must be raised to $72 billion per year.

In that regard, my delegation is concerned about the decrease in official development assistance (ODA) to Africa in recent years and believes that the United Nations should be playing a critical role in achieving the Goal that addresses partnership development and in ensuring that donor countries fulfil their commitments on the attainment of the MDGs, especially in Africa. At the same time, it is important not only to increase the volume of external resources but also to improve aid quality in alignment with countries' priorities.

It is with great satisfaction that we acknowledge the active cooperation that has been taking place in the context of South-South cooperation between developing countries and middle-income countries. We believe that such cooperation will enable Africa's development to make progress. For our part, as a country that could overcome its crisis stemming from its economy in transition, we are ready to cooperate with countries from the African continent within the South-South cooperation framework and provide technical assistance in the financial and agricultural sectors, the training of experts and the diversification of the economy.

Taking into consideration the unstable situation on the continent that hinders well-rounded human development, we support the proposals to expand the Security Council to provide the maximum number of seats to African States in order to encourage greater involvement by those countries in the resolution of peace and security issues.

In conclusion, we hope that, in fulfilling its commitment to the continent that is appropriately named the cradle of humankind, the international community will join efforts to help the peoples of Africa in their quest for a decent life.

Mr. Gioia (United States of America): The United States congratulates the members of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) on their continued solid performance in the implementation of programmes that are enhancing good governance and economic growth across Africa. We remain a staunch supporter of NEPAD and believe that its activities are central to fulfilling the vision that each generation should do better than the one before it, in freedom, prosperity and security.

Along with good governance, infrastructure development and creating the conditions for sustained private investment, support for Africa's farmers remains central to achieving poverty eradication and the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As the Assembly knows, the African Union and President Bush hosted a meeting of global leaders from business, foundations and non-governmental organizations to help contribute to promoting food security by identifying commitments to partnerships along the agricultural value chain.

In response to the Africa Union's commitment to fast track the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the United States has pledged to work to tackle the key barriers to the implementation of the Programme. In addition to President Bush's $5.5 billion commitment to combat hunger and promote agricultural development, United States private-sector leaders have also responded.

Monsanto has announced that it is investing around $3 million per day, or over $1 billion a year, mainly in the areas of plant breeding and biotechnology, to develop better corn, cotton, soybeans and vegetable seeds. John Deere is focused on the expansion of appropriate farm equipment and technologies to significantly improve productivity with reduced tillage. Land O'Lakes partners with farmer groups and cooperatives in Africa to improve the incomes of poor small farmers and produce higher quality and more affordable dairy products for consumers. The Gates Foundation is working with a wide range of partners, seeking to enhance the complete agricultural value chain — from planting the highest quality seeds and improving farm management practices to bringing crops to market — and has committed more than $900 million to help small farmers in Africa and South Asia boost their productivity and incomes.

Already, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), founded in 2004, has made more than half its total grants of $5.5 billion in agricultural and rural development, with $1.7 billion going to African agriculture alone. The Millennium Challenge Corporation has also announced a collaborative venture between it and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.

The United States remains committed to supporting the NEPAD Comprehensive Africa

Agriculture Development Programme. We support the CAADP in six countries that are meeting their pledges and through the Initiative to End Hunger in Africa, which provides assistance in three areas: science and technology, linking producers to markets and reaching out to the vulnerable. Our support for the CAADP over a five-year period is approximately $200 million per year.

I would like to update the General Assembly on progress made under President Bush's Malaria Initiative (PMI). In 2005, we pledged more than $1.2 billion through 2010 for 15 of the hardest hit African countries. The PMI is partnering with host Governments, non-governmental organizations and faith-based and community groups to create access for the poorest of the poor to indoor residual spraying to keep deadly mosquitoes at bay, distribute insecticide-treated bednets and provide preventive malaria treatment for expectant mothers during their pregnancies.

The PMI also provides capacity-building for national implementation strategies. After two years of implementation, I can say that the PMI is making a significant impact. For example, in Zanzibar, the percentage of children who tested positive for malaria dropped from 20 per cent in 2005 to less than 1 per cent today. The United States has also become the largest contributor — $2.5 billion so far — to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Finally, we thank the Secretary-General and the members of the Secretariat who have provided us with the report (A/63/206) on the progress on implementation and international support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. In that regard, we urge the United Nations Development Programme to continue and enhance their support in the field for African States and the implementation of NEPAD programmes.

In sum, as shown by our commitment to the African people in the areas of agriculture and the treatment and prevention of malaria, as well as in our many other initiatives to assist sub-Saharan Africa, the United States continues to stand with our African partners in achieving lasting poverty eradication and the promise of a better life for all.

Mr. Matenje (Malawi): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the progress achieved in the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (A/63/206); his report on implementation of the recommendations contained in the report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/63/212); and his note transmitting the report on the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa (A/63/219).

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Kenya on behalf of the African Group and by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The reports before us indicate that there are many positive developments taking place in Africa. The launch of the African Union and its socio-economic development programme NEPAD; increased African leadership in resolving conflicts on the continent; a growing commitment to people-centred development and regional integration; and an increased willingness to discuss and tackle difficult political and socio-economic questions through the African Peer Review Mechanism, and to make the necessary reforms: these are all positive trends.

Despite those positive trends, Africa still faces challenges, including rising food and energy costs, climate change, the failure of the Doha Development Round and the collapse of international financial markets. Furthermore, due to deepening poverty, current economic gains being achieved on the continent and in individual African countries have yet to be translated into the visible wealth necessary to eradicate poverty, particularly among the poorest, who live on less than 1 dollar a day. Unless the commitments for achieving the NEPAD's objectives are fulfilled urgently and in full, Africa in general is unlikely to meet the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), within the agreed time frames.

It is therefore no wonder that at the high-level meeting on Africa's development held on 22 September 2008, many African leaders issued a call to address the urgent need to promote international trade, foreign direct investment and infrastructure development in Africa, including in the agriculture, health and transport fields and in combating climate change. Malawi supports that call.

For its part, Malawi is currently implementing various agricultural initiatives, including an

agricultural subsidy programme targeted at poor smallholder farmers, with a view to achieving food and nutrition security and fighting poverty and hunger at the national level. Malawi is also developing green belts along its rivers and lakes in order to increase agricultural production to support its predominantly agro-based economy. Malawi hopes that such initiatives will enable us to achieve MDG 1.

In an effort to reduce transport costs and promote access to international trade, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia have submitted a project to NEPAD and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to open a water channel along the Shire river in Malawi and Mozambique and the Zambezi river in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe to the Indian Ocean port of Chinde in Mozambique. We believe that the Shire-Zambezi Waterway Project constitutes an urgent solution to the transport challenges faced by Malawi, Zambia and the hinterland of Mozambique in accessing international trade. This is an example of the urgent solutions to Africa's development challenges envisaged in paragraph 39 of the Political Declaration on Africa's development adopted at the conclusion of the high-level meeting on Africa's development held on 22 September 2008 (resolution 63/1). Malawi welcomes the adoption of that Declaration. Accordingly, we look forward to receiving the support of the international community in implementing the Shire-Zambezi Waterway Project.

In this regard, we join those who have called on the industrialized countries to fulfil their NEPAD commitments to increase official development assistance and make it available as soon as possible to developing countries. We also call for an early resumption and conclusion of the Doha Development Round in order to give developing countries equitable access to international trade and enable them to create the wealth that is so badly needed to reduce poverty. We hope that the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus will present an opportunity for the international community to resolve the deadlock over the trade talks.

Malawi recognizes that economic development in Africa cannot be achieved without genuine peace and security. Accordingly, we welcome the progress achieved so far under the auspices of the United Nations to prevent new conflicts and resolve existing ones in Africa. We also commend the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission to foster sustainable peace and security in conflict-afflicted areas in Africa. Malawi will continue to play its part in the maintenance of peace and security as evidenced by its participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions on the continent and beyond.

Malaria continues to be one of the greatest threats to Africa's development. Its devastating effects are compounded by tuberculosis and HIV and AIDS, which affect millions of people. It is a major public health problem in Malawi and remains the most common cause of illness and death among children under 5 years of age and expectant women. Malaria alone accounts for 40 per cent of outpatient consultations at most health facilities in the country. To address the problem, the Malawi Government is implementing a Malaria Strategic Plan, which it formulated in line with the Roll Back Malaria Initiative. Under that plan, the Government has intensified the fight against malaria through measures including the distribution of insecticide-treated bednets, particularly to mothers and children under 5, and the prompt and effective treatment of malaria within 24 hours of the onset of illness. It is expected that 97 per cent of all households in our country will have at least one bednet by 2015.

While preventive measures such as the distribution of insecticide-treated bednets are most welcome, we believe that fundamental reforms must be made to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights with a view to making malaria, tuberculosis and HIV drugs readily available and affordable in Africa. In addition, cross-border initiatives should be intensified in order to make Africa a malaria-free continent.

In conclusion, Malawi appreciates the support it receives in the fight against malaria from its development partners, including the United Nations and its institutions, the Global Fund and President Bush's Malaria Initiative. We also welcome the Global Malaria Action Plan announced by Mr. Ray Chambers, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Malaria.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ms. Ritola (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is honoured to take the floor in this important annual debate.

The IFRC's approach to African development starts from communities. We believe that sustainable development efforts should be based on enabling the poor and the vulnerable to better handle current and future risks. Empowering communities and making them the centre of action is at the heart of the IFRC.

Today, Africa is facing a development emergency, accumulated by the ongoing food and energy crises, climate change and the growing intensity of natural disasters. Those multidimensional challenges contribute to the increasing risk potentials and make more and more people vulnerable. The non-achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) would further aggravate those vulnerabilities. Therefore, political will and commitment are as essential for human development as a successful pro-poor outcome in Doha.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as auxiliaries to their public authorities and with a presence virtually everywhere in the African continent, have a unique capacity to work with Governments to strengthen communities and drive development.

The role of National Societies is crucial, particularly in mobilizing millions of trained and respected volunteers to raise awareness on health and disaster risks, to promote good community practices and to support improved access to water and food resources. Our approach is consistent with the view of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the importance of partnership-building. No Government or organization alone can make a significant difference to the challenges confronting Africa. The value of partnerships cannot be overestimated, and they must also involve communities in order to be truly effective.

The IFRC has responded to the food crisis by launching a five-year strategic food security framework with 15 National Societies in southern Africa. The purpose is to scale up our efforts in the area of national food security programming and to provide at least 20 per cent of the most vulnerable populations with longer-term food security support to enhance their resilience.

In Mali, as an effort to combat food insecurity in the Goundam Circle area, the Mali Red Cross has helped to improve the prospects of 43,000 people in the area and has given communities a new sense of purpose and hope.

In Burundi, as part of a three-year organizational development project, 30,000 volunteers have been trained in order to ensure that, by the end of the project, elected village committees will be supporting the provision of community services in more than 2,700 villages. The project has the generous support of the President of the Republic and others in Government, who see it as a crucial step in Burundi's development.

The IFRC's malaria programmes, with long-life insecticide-treated nets — more than 12 million of which have been distributed in malaria-endemic countries since 2002 — have been instituted with a wide range of partners, and their results have been truly remarkable in terms of reducing mortality and restoring community confidence. Our Global Alliance on HIV is a paradigm for returning Africa to the good health and prosperity that its people so richly deserve. These are not just programmes for public health, but essential ingredients in development programming.

Those examples are partnerships at work for Africa's development, reflecting the IFRC's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. We are taking this debate further ourselves. The seventh Pan-African Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is convening in Johannesburg as we speak, bringing together 53 African National Societies and observers from around the world, including Governments and the United Nations itself. It is our hope to dedicate ourselves to a new partnership stage under the slogan "Together for action in Africa". We look forward to presenting the outcomes of that important meeting and today express our sincere appreciation to the Government and the Permanent Mission of South Africa for their consistent support for our objectives.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Mr. Bené (Holy See): Unfortunately, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See Mission is not able to be here, and I am making this statement on his behalf.

My delegation is grateful for the extensive report of the World Health Organization (see A/63/219) on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/180, entitled "2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa", and notes both the challenges in combating that disease and the progress made thus far.

The General Assembly's recent decision to give greater attention to developing countries, especially in Africa, is a positive step in the right direction, particularly because it recognizes that malaria can be substantially reduced through public awareness, education and the committing of resources to research and treatment. Given that, over the past 15 years, there has been an increased prevalence of the disease — which could well double the death rate over the next 20 years — it is imperative that the international community work together to fight this pandemic.

Each year, between 300 million and 500 million people contract malaria, which kills more than 1 million people, with at least one death occurring every 30 seconds. According to the World Health Organization, 90 per cent of such deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa, and the majority of victims are children under 5 years of age, with nearly 3,000 children dying every day in that region. Furthermore, the next-largest group of victims is composed of pregnant mothers. Malaria remains a major threat to human security. Because of the cost of prevention and treatment, those who live in poverty are those most susceptible to this serious disease.

A great number of committed individuals, especially skilled health personnel, are working in primary health centres and through various faith-based organizations in many of the most affected areas to care for and properly treat those who have been infected. These providers, who often go unnoticed, perform heroic acts of service by caring for those in need.

Our focus in addressing this disease must remain on research, prevention and treatment. We know that a reduction in malaria transmission is achieved through prevention of mosquito bites and control of the mosquito population. From that perspective, it seems opportune to recall the Abuja Declaration, which calls for, among other things, the development of mechanisms to facilitate the provision of reliable information to decision-makers at various epidemiological levels in order to enable health authorities to devise appropriate control and surveillance strategies.

Individuals must be able to receive affordable, safe and, where necessary, free diagnostic testing and drugs. Proper diagnosis is available, and infected individuals can make a full recovery if provided with adequate means. Efforts should be made so that appropriate treatment is accessible to those who are suffering.

Resources must continue to be allocated to ongoing research into the development of new, safe and cost-efficient vaccines, as well as medicines to treat those infected. Success in such endeavours will not fail to translate into a gradual reduction in the overall number of infections.

In particular, my delegation calls attention to positive efforts to assist those in need. One is reminded of the importance of educating families and helping them to care for their loved ones who have contracted malaria. Many Catholic organizations are deeply involved in that field, with wide and directed campaigns. Furthermore, they train community groups to educate parents and caregivers of young children infected with malaria.

Notwithstanding other serious infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, which demand equal attention, our efforts on malaria cannot be sidelined. Clearly, the global community must remain committed to fighting all diseases that threaten human lives and security.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

The President returned to the Chair.

The President: Our debate has been wide-ranging and informative and has served to sustain the momentum within the Assembly to build understanding and support for Africa's development.

I was particularly reassured by the emphasis that speakers gave to the deteriorating international financial environment in which we are working and within which Africa is struggling to find its rightful place in the world. Speakers cautioned that the global financial crisis that is unfolding must not undermine

the funding, the technical cooperation and the opening of markets in the North that Africans are counting on.

The solidarity expressed by industrialized countries, particularly by representatives of Europe, and the developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific regions, underscores the strong commitment that has been reinforced by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) framework. South-South cooperation is stronger than ever. The representatives from Africa have been clear about taking the leading role in the complex process of bringing good governance, peace and security and development to all Africans through regional and national initiatives inspired in no small part by NEPAD.

NEPAD, it is pointed out, has created an effective leadership process for engaging development partners on issues such as international trade arrangements, debt relief and official development assistance (ODA). Speakers have noted that progress will accelerate significantly if G8 countries reverse the decline in ODA and keep their promise to double ODA to Africa by 2010.

Additionally, as recommended by the Secretary-General's report, African countries should allocate more resources towards NEPAD priorities and encourage private-sector participation in partnership projects, particularly those public-private projects for infrastructure. There were also recommendations to launch an African green revolution and improve both economic and political governance through the increasingly effective African Peer Review Mechanism, an innovation that is recognized for creating an enabling environment in matters of governance and accountability.

The Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa points out that Africa has made sustained efforts to promote peace, deepen its commitment to democratic processes and good governance over the past 10 years.

The African Union's Peace and Security Council and other structures at the regional level are playing an increasing role in mediating disputes between and within African countries. These mechanisms have also enabled Africans to address the terrible problems relating to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Still, our debate reminds us of the enormous complexity of the problems facing Africa. Today we have given special attention to the report on the campaign against malaria, which is of direct concern to half of the world's people. The stark fact is that 91 per cent of the deaths from that disease are in Africa. It is imperative that donors sustain the funding required to cut this mortality rate in half by 2010 and meet the related objectives within the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework.

Our debate must be seen in the broader and ongoing context of the General Assembly's special concern for Africa. It closely follows the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs held on 22 September and the High-level Event on the MDGs held on 25 September, which focused again on Africa. We will deepen the process at the Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development at the end of November.

Clearly the deteriorating international financial environment highlights the urgent need for the international community to develop a comprehensive strategic plan that addresses both the unresolved causes of continuing violent conflict on the continent and the need for a proactive approach to new issues as they emerge. As President, I am committed to work with Member States to promote such an effort.

With each opportunity, we stand witness to the emergence of new African leaders who are working to ensure that Africa's development benefits Africans first. We clearly support this new paradigm. I think the Deputy Permanent Representative of China put it very clearly when he stated that we must listen to African voices, respect African views, accommodate African concerns and support Africa's efforts to implement its own programmes. This is our collective responsibility and it is gratifying to know how seriously it is being taken.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 57 and its sub-items (a) and (b) and agenda item 43.

Agenda item 106

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/213)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.5)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to make some remarks regarding our consideration of this agenda item. The abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1808 seems to have happened long ago, but I believe most of us appreciate the importance of bringing this historic event to the attention of the General Assembly and the world.

The abolition of the slave trade, which criss-crossed the Atlantic from Africa to Europe, Latin America and North America for hundreds of years, did not actually end slavery. However, it was an important step towards this ban, marking one of the early decisions by the international community to join forces to combat the brutal and enormously lucrative slave trade.

It is a tragedy that the slave trade and slavery itself continue to have deep, though largely invisible, effects on our world today.

This year, on 25 March, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade was commemorated for the first time. I have always been an advocate of forgiveness and reconciliation. But the slave trade constitutes one of those horrendous crimes against humanity that many Africans have been generous enough to forgive but that none of us, anywhere in the world, should forget.

The slave trade, it is widely recognized, was an institution that not only devastated a continent but poisoned the roots of societies, young and old, by its corrosive presence. We all continue to suffer the consequences of that exploitation — obviously, some of us much more than others.

In virtually all societies around the world, slavery remains with us, often invisible and tolerated on an international scale.

Slavery was a socio-economic model that treated people like goods, a system of social relations based on domination and the denigrating treatment of people, one of the worst forms of discrimination and social exclusion. Transatlantic slavery was for centuries a scourge in the world. Millions lost their lives in the long march through Africa and the subsequent transatlantic crossing. Millions were exploited under brutal conditions, and on their shoulders and lives an alien society was built that excluded them and denied them their status as human beings.

Sixty years ago, in 1948, the General Assembly proclaimed in article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and in article 2 that:

> "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion ... or other status."

Afterwards, in 1955, the Convention on Slavery entered into force.

Years later, in 2001, we adopted the Durban Declaration, which stated that

> "slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims, and [we] further acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade and are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of these acts and continue to be victims of their consequences".

The adoption of all these instruments was the fruit of titanic struggles to eradicate imperial domination from peoples' minds and from legal systems and to finally recognize that human rights are for everyone.

On this commemoration of the abolition of slavery, we must recognize that the rich countries established the foundations of their economies in the sweat and lives of millions of African slaves. States

must not be content with removing slavery from their legal systems; we must identify new forms of slavery and combat them and eradicate them from the planet. We must do the same with regard to their consequences: neocolonialism, systems of discrimination, economic inequalities and the demands of multilateral organizations to hand over reserves and natural resources as interest payments on an immoral external debt.

In the nineteenth century and even in the twentieth century, many laws on the abolition of slavery provided compensation for slave owners. Today, States must think of different ways to compensate for the cultural, economic and social outrages committed against African countries. Plans and coherent strategies are needed for material, moral and ethical compensation. We cannot limit ourselves to monetary reparation, because it is not a question of paying and forgetting. We must never forget and return to that infamy. We must ask forgiveness and consciously acknowledge the damage done by one part of humanity. Accepting it by the other part should not be a passive acceptance, but active and transformative. As the people of Africa say today, they would like to be the creators and protagonists of their own political models and of their human and liberating development.

I now call on the representative of Guyana to introduce draft resolution A/63/L.5.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) group of countries at the United Nations, along with the African Group and other Member States sponsoring this text, to introduce for adoption today draft resolution A/63/L.5, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade".

The draft resolution before us today, which is essentially procedural in nature, seeks to address developments that have taken place since the adoption of resolution 62/122 last December. Two years ago, we acknowledged in this very Hall that slavery and the transatlantic slave trade represent one of the low points in the history of humanity. We recalled the forced removal of more than 18 million people, over a period of 500 years, from Africa to the Americas, including the Caribbean, the United States, Brazil and other parts of Latin America, as well as to Europe.

We recall that 25 March has been designated as an annual International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, beginning in 2008. In that context, on behalf of the States members of CARICOM, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the update provided in his report (A/63/213) on activities held earlier this year to commemorate the anniversary of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We look forward to collaborating with you, Mr. President, the Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information for similar commemorative activities on 25 March 2009.

The significance of that date is of historic proportions, since some 200 years ago on that date the final reward was granted to the abolition advocates when their untiring efforts led to the passage in the British Parliament of the act for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the British Empire, and subsequently the end of slavery throughout the world. The annual remembrance day, linked to the accomplishment of the abolitionists, will serve as a valuable complement to the existing UNESCO International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, whose date of 23 August aptly recognizes the historically important contribution of the slaves of Haiti themselves, who rose up in resistance to slavery and engineered their own emancipation.

In 2001, the international community gathered in South Africa for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances, which was held under the auspices of the United Nations and subsequently issued what is commonly referred to as the Durban Declaration. We view the permanent memorial project in a wider context, as a partial fulfilment of paragraph 101 of the Durban Declaration, which, inter alia, calls upon the international community to honour the memory of the victims of slavery. Consequently, we have sought in the third preambular paragraph to reaffirm the commitment made by States in 2001.

We cannot help but recall the horrific and dehumanizing nature of slavery and the slave trade, whereby the captives were forced into detention and transported as human cargo, packed into the foul holds of ships as mere chattels and taken across the Atlantic to the so-called New World. They were emasculated, sold and robbed of their culture, and their skins were

branded by hot irons and imprinted with the label of their owners. Those horrific images still jolt the conscience, recalling and reinforcing the depths of man's inhumanity to man. For that reason, we thought it fitting to stress in the fourth preambular paragraph the importance of educating and informing future generations about the causes, consequences and lessons of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery.

The permanent memorial will stand as an acknowledgement of one of the most horrific tragedies of modern history that is often forgotten. It will stand as a reminder of the struggle against and triumph over the enslavement and dehumanization of a single race over five centuries for economic gains and the legacy it has left behind; hence the theme "acknowledging the tragedy, considering the legacy, lest we forget". We regard the placement of that memorial at the United Nations as a significant symbol of what this Organization represents — the promotion and preservation of the dignity and worth of all human beings, which are principles central to the United Nations Charter.

In view of the importance of the permanent memorial to humankind and the universal nature of such a monument, we believe that it should be erected in a place of prominence that would be accessible not only to the representatives of this house, but to all who visit the United Nations. We have therefore sought to clarify the language used in the previous resolution, which referred to the halls of the United Nations. Indeed, it is the widely held view that a place of prominence at the United Nations, easily accessible to representatives, United Nations staff and visitors, such as the plaza at the visitors' entrance, would be a more appropriate location for a monument of such great significance. In such a setting, the memorial will truly be accessible to all people and all nations.

Through the draft resolution, the Assembly will endorse the establishment of the committee of interested States, referred to in operative paragraph 2, to oversee the permanent memorial project. The committee is being drawn from all geographical regions of the United Nations. Importantly, the States members of the Caribbean Community and the African Union are playing a primary role in advancing the work of the committee and Jamaica has already been elected to serve as its Chairman. Additionally, the committee, given its inclusive nature, collaborates with non-State partners, such as the Secretariat, UNESCO, the Schomburg Center and civil society representatives.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

A voluntary fund, the Permanent Memorial Fund, established in keeping with resolution 62/122, has been set up under the custody of the Permanent Mission of Jamaica towards the realization of the memorial. However, in the interest of further transparency and accountability, it is proposed that the wider committee oversee the Fund. At the same time, the committee is seeking to explore, with the Secretariat, methods of ensuring enhanced transparency and accountability for the management of the Fund in a manner that would be acceptable to all Member States.

In response to enquiries about the budgetary implications arising from the adoption of the draft resolution, let me say categorically that there are no such implications for the permanent memorial project. It is our hope that the permanent memorial will become a reality through the generous contributions given voluntarily by Member States, as well as any fund-raising activities that may be organized by the committee. On behalf of the group of CARICOM States, I wish therefore to acknowledge with appreciation contributions and pledges towards the Fund already received from Member States, while also encouraging Member States and other interested parties to join in that important effort.

We would also like to place on record our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Secretariat and members of the Committee for their invaluable support, technical advice and assistance towards the implementation of the permanent memorial project.

Racism, racial discrimination and prejudice continue to cast a destructive stain on societies across the globe, and the roots and linkages with the transatlantic slave trade and slavery are clearly established; hence, the call to action by States.

It is in that context that, in paragraph 6, we reiterate the request contained in resolution 61/19 of 28 November 2006 for Member States that have not already done so to develop educational programmes, including through school curricula, designed to educate and inculcate in future generations an understanding of the lessons, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General, which provides an update on the Secretariat's activities to establish, for the first time, an educational outreach programme to mobilize, inter alia, educational institutions and civil society on the subject of commemorating the transatlantic slave trade and slavery. We believe that this will help to address the ignorance and knowledge gap, primarily among young people, in understanding the impact and consequences of slavery and the slave trade. Through the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request that the Secretary-General, in collaboration with and building upon the work undertaken by UNESCO through the Slave Route Project, continue the outreach programme to inculcate future generations with an understanding of the causes, consequences and lessons of the transatlantic slave trade and to inform them of the dangers of racism and prejudice.

The General Assembly would, by its consensus adoption of this important draft resolution, recognize the continuing impact of slavery and the horrific transatlantic slave trade on the African diaspora and its descendants, many of whom are in the Assembly Hall today. That has added significance as we prepare to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights later this year. It will engage in a practical and deliberate educational outreach programme with a view to addressing the dangers of racism and prejudice that continue to threaten the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In conclusion, the CARICOM group of Member States sincerely thanks the many sponsors and supporters of the current draft resolution and now invites the General Assembly to give its unequivocal support to its adoption with a view to bringing to a successful conclusion the process begun in 2006 in this our United Nations.

Mr. Muita (Kenya): The African Group is pleased to render its support to the important draft resolution before us today (A/63/L.5) at a time when we are both introducing and taking action on it in the Assembly. At the outset, we wish to convey our sincerest appreciation to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) group of countries for the initiative and efforts that have allowed all of us to reflect on our past deeds, our amazing ability to endure and overcome immense adversity, and the collective action that led to the demise of the most immoral and dehumanizing aspect of history.

On behalf of the States members of the African Group, I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for the update provided in his report on activities held earlier this year to commemorate the anniversary of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We look forward to working with the President, the Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information on similar commemorative activities next year.

On 25 March 1807, Britain legally abolished the slave trade and formally brought to a close the most horrific experiences man has ever known. That action was thereafter separately replicated by other Powers of the time. Notwithstanding that seemingly noble action, slavery was tolerated, condoned and allowed to continue in practice a long time. Man continued to enslave fellow man, treating him like personal property and thereby robbing him of all his dignity. The process of fighting for rights and taking back human dignity was characterized by profound risk, danger and sacrifice. It took collective efforts and great courage to fight against and defeat slavery. With our discussion on this subject, humanity is turning a page on a very painful past indeed. Useful lessons are discernible from those actions, which took place in not so distant a past. Besides the abolitionists, the unsung heroes are the slaves themselves.

We face many challenges today. We can draw inspiration from those who rallied against the slave trade and slavery just over two centuries ago. Collective efforts worked before and we believe that they are the surest way to address our challenges. The draft resolution is proposing the construction of a permanent memorial at the United Nations as a permanent reminder of man's inhumanity to his fellow man and as an injunction against such a horrendous institution ever being allowed to manifest itself in our society again.

The permanent memorial dedicated to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery can never be an atonement for the wretched suffering of humankind, but is just a token of appreciation to all those heroes who stood steadfastly, who pitted their lives against injustice, who opposed slavery and fought for freedom, as well as those who fell victim to cruel and inhuman treatment meted out against them by unscrupulous

profiteers, slave masters and unjust societies. The permanent memorial will serve to remind us of the heroic actions of the slaves, abolitionists and the numerous unheralded men and women of conscience who stood up to be counted in the face of grave danger and adversity.

The permanent memorial will be a memory, a history, a journey through a difficult time, a reminder of the atrocities of the Middle Passage, the cruel transatlantic journey and the seasoning camps. The memorial will also be an educational resource and a statue of lifelong learning. It will be a reconstruction of the past in order to mould the future. It will be a constant reminder of the vulnerability of humanity.

The permanent memorial will also be a reminder of the challenges that we continue to face today. Vices such as racism, xenophobia and discrimination, all akin to slavery, have begun rearing their ugly heads again. There have been incidences of bias, incitement to hatred and hate crimes in our societies. We are called upon to firmly stand up to and reject any and all notions of supremacy or supremacist ideology. We have to guard against the danger of slipping back into barbarism.

By adopting the draft resolution, we shall point out the importance of gaining a better understanding of the slave trade and slavery in general. We shall be committing ourselves to ensuring that information relating to the slave trade and slavery is available and disseminated to all segments of society, particularly through institutions of learning, so that they can join in the efforts to promote a cohesive international society based on knowledge and understanding of our history. By encouraging learning about slavery, we shall reduce the danger of making the same mistakes in the future.

The construction of the permanent memorial will require resources and we invite the international community to join in the endeavour and donate generously so that we may preserve our memory. Those would be resources put to good use. I urge us to heed the wise words of the Nigerian Nobel Laureate Professor Wole Soyinka when he stated that "a people who do not preserve their memory are a people who have forfeited their history". Let us give new impetus to the words "never again".

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the African Group's support for the draft resolution and for the construction of a permanent memorial in honour of all the victims of the slave trade, the brave abolitionists and the collective international efforts that led to the abolition of the slave trade and slavery. I urge all Member States to support the adoption of the draft resolution.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by the representatives of Guyana on behalf of the 14 States Members of the Caribbean Community and of Kenya on behalf of the 54 members of the African Group of countries.

It is an honour and privilege for me to speak on agenda item 108, "Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade". It is a well known fact that my own region's history is deeply rooted in the legacy of slavery, having been colonized first by the Spanish in the 1500s. Thereafter, most Caribbean countries remained under British colonial rule for more than 300 years. During the colonial period, our region's ports witnessed the arrival of numerous vessels transporting hundreds of thousands of Africans across the Atlantic to fortify the labour-intensive market created by the then-ruling British plantocracy.

It took the international community almost 200 years to acknowledge slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity. We have been asked why we bother to rehash an event that happened so long ago. But for us, the people of the Caribbean and of Africa, 200 years is really not very long ago. As descendants of those who lived and died during those 500 years, it remains our solemn obligation to ensure that their memories are honoured and that their suffering is never forgotten.

It should also be recalled that among the most pernicious legacies of slavery and the slave trade is the existence of apartheid and racism, which remained entrenched in southern Africa until towards the end of the twentieth century. Those scourges were uprooted only thanks to the indomitable spirit and struggle of the peoples of the entire African continent to break free from the dehumanization and hardship which they faced.

Consequently, it is with a sense of duty and deep humility that we seek to honour the memories of our ancestors who were brought to the Caribbean region as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. We firmly believe that the permanent memorial that was

mentioned by the Chair of the Caribbean Community and endorsed by the General Assembly last year should be viewed as a tangible source of hope and a means of remembrance of the struggles to break free of the hardships faced under colonial rule.

I take this opportunity to express appreciation to the members of the committee that was established to oversee the permanent memorial project and for electing Jamaica as Chair and temporary custodian of the voluntary fund. We thank the committee for the confidence it has bestowed on us and we will strive to fulfil the objective of executing the project in the most effective and efficient manner. I make this point to highlight the fact that, with the adoption of the draft resolution before us today, we seek to broaden the latter responsibility so that the committee will oversee the fund while it seeks to explore with the Secretariat methods of ensuring enhanced transparency and accountability for its operation in a manner that would be acceptable to all Member States.

With members' indulgence, I also wish to express sincere appreciation for the kind generosity of the Governments of those countries that have already made donations to the Permanent Memorial Fund. We are thankful for the show of solidarity in acknowledging the legacy of this dark period of history. In that regard, I wish to publicly thank the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Haiti, Luxembourg, Mozambique, Namibia, Portugal, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Syria, Turkey and, of course, my own country, Jamaica. We envisage that other countries will follow in their footsteps in making contributions to the Permanent Fund.

In closing, I would also like to make special mention of those countries from which we have so far received pledges: Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and, of course, the United Kingdom.

Finally, I took forward to collaborating with the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Department of Public Information and other Member States in the preparatory activities to mark the annual commemorative event on 25 March in honour of the anniversary of the abolition of slavery and the slave trade.

Mrs. Núñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The transatlantic African slave trade was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of humankind and the most serious violation of human rights ever committed in terms of its scale and duration. Between 1450 and 1850, some 12 million African men, women and children were torn from their homes, sold as slaves and forced to cross the Atlantic Ocean from their countries of origin to the American continent. Many millions more perished en route. For each slave transported and sold, three died. More than 60,000 voyages were necessary. Considered by many as the largest human deportation in history, the transatlantic slave trade had an irreversible effect on the enslaved African population because, with the exception of some small groups, millions of Africans were never able to return to their country of origin.

However, the crime of imposed deportation was not enough. The slave trade was accompanied by strong racist ideology. Black people were classified as inferior beings, frequently as animals. They were considered to have no rights under the law and were therefore treated legally as objects.

In Cuba, deep traces of that sordid chapter remain. During the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, approximately 1.3 million Africans were forcibly transported to Cuba to be enslaved on plantations and in services of various types. During the colonial period in our country, Africans and their descendants alike suffered the ravages of racism, discrimination, a total lack of rights and marginalization even after slavery was prohibited in the second half of the 1880s. Unfortunately, Cuba was not the only country in the American continent that was a victim of the transatlantic slave trade. Stories similar to Cuba's were re-enacted throughout nearly the entire American continent and the Antilles.

The so-called triangular slave trade was part and parcel of the bloody exploitation and impoverishment of the African continent and the cruel discrimination that African descendents in the western hemisphere suffered for years. The inhuman business of the slave trade was profitable only for the colonial metropoles that started, developed and maintained it over centuries. It had disastrous consequences for the economic development of the only affected areas, in particular in the African continent, which was plunged into several centuries of economic backwardness and political disorder that continued with the formal colonization of the so-called scramble for Africa of the nineteenth century.

Paradoxically, nowadays many purport to be unaware of, justify or, worse still, erase that sad chapter from our history. The opposition of the former colonial metropolises to any formula aimed at honouring an historical debt to those who endured slavery over centuries has become entrenched.

Those who amassed huge fortunes at the expense of the slaves' sweat and blood, and plunged our nations into the disastrous consequences of monoproduction and monocrop economies cannot wash their hands now of their dark past by means of a self-induced historical amnesia in the midst of a neoliberal globalization whereby the rich — the very same as those of times past — have grown ever richer and our nations have been reduced to exclusion and impoverishment.

Cuba attaches great importance to the United Nations endeavours to combat racism and xenophobia, and particularly the actions agreed at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in August and September 2001, to focus due attention on the needs of the victims of slavery, the slave trade, servitude imposed on indigenous peoples and colonialism, as well as their descendants.

Despite being subject to a tight economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States Government for more than four decades, Cuba has developed and will continue to develop cooperation programmes with African, Caribbean and other third world sister nations as part of a joint effort to reverse the consequences of the slave trade and other sad moments of colonialism and neocolonialism.

We will continue to insist that slavery and the transatlantic slave trade be declared crimes against humanity and that the descendants of the victims of those criminal practices, colonialism and the genocidal exploitation of indigenous peoples be given the reparations and compensation they deserve as an outstanding measure of historical justice.

The commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade is also an opportunity to remember contemporary forms of slavery: trafficking in persons, forced prostitution, forced labour in slave conditions and the use of children in international drug trafficking. Those forms continue to flourish today, mostly as the result of discrimination, social exclusion and vulnerability, which are all exacerbated by poverty. The international community must be aware of that fact. Their eradication is a goal for all of us.

Mr. Chabar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, and as this is the first time I take the floor in the plenary, allow me to congratulate Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his accession to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session and on the initiatives he has undertaken to mobilize Member States to confront the challenges of today. His wisdom and his erudition will be precious assets in uniting and bringing together the international community on its path towards a safer, fairer and more human world. He may rest assured of our delegation's support.

The Kingdom of Morocco aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Kenya on behalf of the African Group, and wishes to add the following comments.

Today, commemoration and remembrance combine as the General Assembly prepares to adopt a beacon draft resolution at the initiative of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on the creation of a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

The Kingdom of Morocco welcomes that decision, whereby the international community speaks in one voice against collective amnesia regarding one of the most sinister episodes of human history during which, over four centuries, millions of Africans were deported to the new world and reduced to slavery, a lucrative trade that contributed to the development of the Americas and Europe. According to estimates, the different phases of the transatlantic slave trade deprived 25 to 30 million individuals of their freedom, without counting the 17 million who died on ships plying the Atlantic Ocean.

On this solemn occasion, we remember with emotion the tenacious struggle of abolitionists whose names remain indelibly etched in the stone of the pantheon of history: Toussaint Louverture, Frederick Douglass, William Wilberforce, Harriet Tubman and Victor Schoelcher.

The creation of a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery will offer States Members and staff of and visitors to the United Nations a place and a symbol that invites them to reflect on the historical roots, the modus operandi and the consequences of the

inexcusable tragedy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

Beyond the duty of remembrance, it is fundamental to raise awareness of the upheavals that the trade of souls brought upon the various people concerned. The slave trade, as a large-scale forced migration, also led to cultural exchanges that deeply marked habits, beliefs, social relations and knowledge on several continents.

The cultural footprint of the victims of slavery and the slave trade connects fields as varied as knowledge and the arts, oral patrimony, musical genres, philosophy and literature. Slaves were necessarily the vectors of a civilizational legacy that resulted in the fusion of cultures from Europe, Africa, the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean and the Americas.

The Kingdom of Morocco, by commemorating "the greatest tragedy of human history in scale and duration", in the words of the French historian Jean-Michel Deveau, wishes to readdress the intellectual legitimization of slavery and its ideological basis in the doctrinal formulation of anti-black identity and its legal organization through the Code Noir of 1685.

The international community has a sacred duty to deconstruct racial prejudice and to fight ideologies of hatred of the other and intolerance. Of course, those objectives involve the promotion of dialogue between cultures, religions and, more broadly speaking, civilizations. Thus, Morocco participates actively in a number of initiatives, including the Alliance of Civilizations, and untiringly works to promote internally and internationally such values as tolerance, dialogue and respect for others.

Such values are not accidental; they are the result of the millennial history of Morocco, which embodies overlapping and enmeshing African, Arab, European and Andalusian identities.

We invite all States to contribute to the financing of the memorial, which we wish to see serve as a permanent testimony to our rejection of the exploitation of the other, racism and historical amnesia. As an African State, the Kingdom of Morocco calls for a tightening of the bonds between Africa and its diaspora and for the promotion of a relaxation of tensions and reconciliation with others, through an objective and uncompromising reflection on the impact of this tragedy on Africans and their transatlantic descendants.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Kenya on behalf of the African Group in support of draft resolution A/63/L.5, which is before the Assembly.

Ghana attaches great importance to this draft resolution and is pleased to be a part of this initiative which acknowledges one of the worst violations of human rights in the history of humanity: the enslavement and dehumanization of people of African descent over hundreds of years.

We express our appreciation to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for leading the initiative to erect in a place of prominence in the corridors of the United Nations a permanent memorial in honour of those sons and daughters of Africa who perished in the Middle Passage, in resistance to slavery or as a result of the indignities and alienation they suffered in the New World. In this regard, we once again pledge our support for the establishment of a permanent memorial fund to bring the project to fruition.

The memorial will make a significant contribution towards our global efforts to carry out the action plan adopted in 2001 at the Durban Anti-Racism Conference aimed at eradicating the scourge of racism, xenophobia and discrimination. Indeed, the placement of this monument at the United Nations will reaffirm and attest to what our noble Organization stands for: the promotion, protection and preservation of the dignity and worth of all peoples.

We should all follow up to ensure that the necessary resources for effective fulfilment of this project are made available through our generous contributions so that the preparations may proceed as planned.

In conclusion, Ghana wishes to reiterate its support for this important draft resolution.

Mr. McMahan (United States of America): This debate is indeed a fitting reminder of a despicable practice that devalued human life and dignity. After a civil war that sought to reconcile the words and concepts that gave birth to our republic with a brutal reality of a largely agrarian society fuelled by the blood and sweat of human bondage, the thirteenth amendment to the United States Constitution was

adopted on 6 December 1865, officially abolishing slavery in the United States of America.

While the transatlantic slave trade ended centuries ago, a contemporary form of slavery thrives today under a different name: trafficking in persons, or human trafficking. Like the early slave traders, today's traffickers use many of the same tools: kidnapping, fraud, threats and beatings, all aimed, just as in earlier centuries, at forcing men, women and children into labour and sexual exploitation.

Trafficking is a crime that respects no borders. Each year, an estimated 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across international borders, and millions of others are trafficked within their own countries. And in virtually every country around the world, including the United States, men, women and children are held in domestic servitude, forcibly exploited for commercial sex and coerced to work in factories and sweatshops. In some countries, children are forcibly recruited as soldiers. These forms of human trafficking are in fact modern-day slavery.

The United States has taken a broad range of actions to halt these practices, because we strongly believe it is the right thing to do. We remain committed to recognizing the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, commemorating its victims and reversing its harms. We are proud to be in a position to co-sponsor the draft General Assembly resolution regarding a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, which we are about to adopt.

Mr. Rogachev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, allow me to extend the Russian Federation's gratitude to the delegations of the countries of the Caribbean Basin for their draft resolution entitled, "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade" (A/63/L.5), which the Russian Federation co-sponsors. We consider the attention devoted to this problem by the United Nations to be entirely justified.

As is well known, our Organization was born in response to the horrors that afflicted the world during the years of the Second World War. And even though that war and the transatlantic slave trade were separated by 150 years, the underlying causes of those two historic events are very similar. Here we are referring to a perverted concept that claims that one group is allegedly superior to another. It seems especially important to us that the draft resolution include provisions regarding the raising of awareness about the causes and consequences of the slave trade and the lessons to be drawn from its legacy. We are convinced that the current generation and those to come should not forget about this tragic chapter of humankind's history.

It is not often that the United Nations addresses historical wrongs. Indeed, Member States focus first and foremost on the most pressing and current problems. Here, however, we have an example of a case where a historical event is of a global scale; where its effects can be seen on the course of humankind's history and it will continue to have a clear impact on our present and future.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): I would like first of all to align myself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) member States. It was just about two years ago that the CARICOM member States, with the proud co-sponsorship of numerous countries, including those from our ancestral home Africa, ushered through the General Assembly the resolution that established the basis for the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The adoption of that resolution was indeed historic and, as was noted at the time, its mission would be to erect a bridge spanning two hundred years across the seas and lands of Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean.

The legacy of the slave trade highlights, among other things, the capacity in all of us to take principled action, to speak out against injustice and to conquer victimization by living, surviving, advancing and forgiving, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Looking at the lives of the people enslaved for centuries in the Americas and the Caribbean teaches us much about the capacity of human beings to strive and be hopeful, even under the most dehumanizing conditions. The triumph over slavery is a testimony to the human spirit, which can emerge from the harshest victimization, exploitation and oppression, with remarkable joy, creativity and inventiveness.

The indelible etchings of Africa on every aspect of our life in the Caribbean are the bedrock of our sustenance as a people and will always be the source of our creativity and perseverance. On the stage of

history, ours has not always been a joyful and triumphant lot, and yet we participate here today in this world body with utmost pride and determination, the same pride and dogged determination that served to ensure the survival of our forebears even under the most cruel and dire of circumstances. The depths of their humanity, the unyielding core of their spiritual home, have become the wellspring of our undying vision of a peaceful world that is at once hopeful, diverse, tolerant and forward looking — essential elements that must underpin the future in order to ensure the survival of humankind.

Last year, in order to help inculcate in future generations knowledge about the causes, consequences and lessons of slavery, as well as to inform of the dangers of racism and prejudice, the sixty-second session of the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/122, designating 25 March as an annual International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Our watchword must forever be, lest we forget.

For the same compelling reasons, the Bahamas is greatly heartened by the progress made in the ongoing campaign to establish a permanent memorial here at the United Nations to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, in acknowledgement of that tragedy and in consideration of its legacy. As a sponsor of draft resolution A/63/L.5, we wish to express our appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Jamaica for the pivotal role it has played in moving the process forward, to reiterate our sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to that undertaking and to express our hope that many more will support that noble and worthy project. I am pleased to report that the Government of the Bahamas has made a pledge to the fund that will be forthcoming in short order.

Mr. Vishvjit P. Singh (India): I am pleased to participate in the general discussion on the agenda item entitled "Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade". I thank the Member States of the Caribbean region for bringing that important item on to the agenda of the General Assembly. I firmly support the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean States.

Former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru called slavery and the transatlantic slave trade an infinite tragedy. In the Swahili language, it is sometimes referred to as *Maafa*, meaning holocaust or great disaster. It is often overlooked that the tragic crime of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery extended over more than five centuries. Scholars have estimated that during that period the Atlantic slave trade led to the loss of at least 50 million potential African lives. Had that not happened, Africa's population in 1850 would have been 100 million instead of 50 million. The horror of the Middle Passage is unique; during which, without food and basic amenities, at least one sixth of those transported died in loneliness, darkness and trauma.

India shares the pain and suffering of the affected countries. We remember our own tragedy of colonialism and the export of indentured labour. The racism that was an inevitable dimension of slavery became part of the rationale for colonialism. There was a boomerang effect. Nazism was simply that racism applied within Europe. As the great Caribbean poet Césaire said, the poison was slowly distilled into the veins of Europe, and Nazism, before engulfing the whole edifice of Western civilization in its reddened waters, had oozed and trickled from every crack.

We welcome the resolution adopted by the General Assembly two years ago on the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the General Assembly's decision to commemorate that in the United Nations by convening a special meeting of the General Assembly on 26 March 2007. I would also like to welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/63/213) on the programme of educational outreach on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery.

We are honoured to co-sponsor this year's draft resolution entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade". A permanent memorial will symbolize that colossal tragedy and remain before our eyes as a permanent remembrance to stir us to thought and action. We join the Caribbean Community countries in requesting that Member States contribute to that memorial and adopt that draft resolution.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

(*spoke in English*)

Before proceeding to take action on draft resolution A/63/L.5, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the

following countries have become co-sponsors of the draft resolution: Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Croatia, Fiji, Finland, France, Greece, Honduras, Iraq, Japan, Lichtenstein, the Federated States of Micronesia, Monaco, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Russian Federation, Samoa, Serbia, Slovenia, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, the United States of America and Uruguay.

(spoke in Spanish)

I now call on the representative of Cape Verde on a point of order.

Mr. Lima (Cape Verde) *(spoke in French)*: The draft resolution that we are about to adopt is an important draft resolution, as we have seen from the statements of the various representatives who took the floor on this issue.

Personally, I cannot understand that all Africa can be represented only by this month's Chairman of our Group. I request that all the States of Africa be listed as sponsors of the draft resolution, and not only be represented by the Chairman of the African Group. I do not understand the decision that has led to this draft resolution, which is of fundamental importance to all Africa, being limited to being sponsored only by this month's Chairman of the African Group.

The Acting President: The Assembly takes note of the clarification made by the representative of Cape Verde.

(spoke in Spanish)

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/63/L.5, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.5?

Draft resolution A/63/L.5 was adopted (resolution 63/5)

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 108?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The President in the Chair

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: May I inform members that consideration of agenda item 41 entitled "Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS", scheduled for Monday, 3 November 2008, has been deferred to a subsequent date that will be announced in due course. May I also bring to the attention of members that document A/INF/63/4/Rev.1 has been published. It contains a revised version of the General Assembly programme of work and the schedule for plenary meetings for the period from 22 October to December 2008.

I should also like to remind members that the lists of speakers for items listed in document A/INF/63/4/Rev.1 are open.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.